

Opening Statement
Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation
Surface Transportation R&D Hearing
February 12, 2009

It is a pleasure to return to business today and I look forward to a productive and collaborative 111th Congress on this Subcommittee. The economic challenges facing our nation are of utmost importance to us all. We must ensure our nation's citizens have the opportunity to create and innovate. We must support entrepreneurship and help our businesses become more nimble, more efficient, and more competitive. I believe the Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation will take an active role in shaping our economic recovery and competitiveness. I look forward to working closely with you, Chairman Wu, and the rest of my colleagues on the Subcommittee in accomplishing this task.

The agencies we oversee on this subcommittee are vital to the nation's health and well-being. The National Institute of Standards and Technology performs cutting edge research which supports the next generation of computers and electronics, the next generation of fuel-efficient cars, and the next generation of healthcare technologies. The Department of Homeland Security continues to perform life-saving work to ensure our safety and security. And the Department of Transportation supports the highways and railways vital to our commerce and way of life. Chairman Wu, we have a lot of work ahead of us. All of these agencies may see funding increases due to a stimulus plan and all will need close oversight to ensure we are spending taxpayer dollars wisely.

I am happy our first hearing of the year addresses one of the major challenges facing our nation and Congress this year – infrastructure research and development. We are currently contemplating spending billions of dollars on highway and railway infrastructure improvements. We will need to ask important questions in order to address the issues facing our nation's aging infrastructure. How will these projects incorporate science and technology to extend the life of and improve the quality of our transportation networks? How have our R&D programs performed over the past several years and what can we do to improve them? We expect most R&D to be relevant to the problems at hand and expect research agencies to focus on the real-world outcomes of such research.

The witnesses before us today all have expertise in translating results from the lab to the road. I'd like to thank you all for coming today and sharing your thoughts on how to improve our transportation networks and our research activities. I look forward to starting a dialogue with you during the question and answer portion of today's hearing and hope you will continue to work with us as we craft a new highway bill.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Again, it is a pleasure to serve as Ranking Member of this subcommittee and I look forward to continuing this bipartisan and productive relationship. I yield back the balance of my time.